

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4135

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

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LIMDIS

E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, US, IS

SUBJECT: ISRAELI MOOD AND EXPECTATIONS BEFORE SECRETARY'S VISIT

1. BEGIN SUMMARY. IN PERIOD SINCE RABIN'S SEPTEMBER US VISIT, ATMOSPHER HERE IN ISRAEL HAS BEEN DESPITE SOME POSITIVE ELEMENTS, MARKED BY GROWING UNCERTAINTY AND SOME FOREBODING. MAIN POSITIVE ELEMENT HAS BEEN RENEWED SENSE OF CONFIDENCE IN US SUPPORT, BUTTRESSED BY RABIN'S VISIT, REPORTS OF QUALIFIED GOI SATISFACTION OVER US WILLINGNESS TO SUPPLY ISRAELIS' ARMS NEEDS AND CONGRESSIONAL EFFORTS TO ASSURE ADEQUATE AID FUNDS TO ISRAEL. RABIN IS GIVEN MAJOR CREDIT FOR THIS. NEGATIVE ASPECTS OF SITUATION ARE HIGHLIGHTED BY LOOMING PALESTINIAN ISSUE AND AN EROSION OF CONFIDENCE THAT A MEANINGFUL NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT CAN BE REACHED WITH EGYPT, ALWAYS THE KEY COUNTRY FROM ISRAELI PERSEPCTIVE. THERE IS LITTLE, IF ANY, ANTICIPATION THAT QUICK PROGRESS WILL RESULT FROM SECRETARY KISSINGER'S CURRENT ROUND
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OF TALKS, BUT ISRAELIS FEEL AN ALMOST DESPERATE NEED FOR

CLARIFICATIONS THAT WOULD HOLD PROMISE OF MAINTAINING SOME MOMENTUM IN MOVEMENT TOWARDS PEACE. FOR MOST ISRAELIS THIS MEANS INDICATIONS EGYPT IS PREPARED PAY POLITICAL PRICE FOR FURTHER ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL. END SUMMARY.

2. ISRAELI MOOD OVER PAST MONTH HAS BEEN LARGELY MARKED BY PESSIMISTIC OUTLOOK ON PROSPECTS FOR PEACE, COMPOUNDED BY GENUINE PERPLEXITY ABOUT PROBLEMS RELATED TO PEACE NEGOTIATIONS, A SENSE THAT TIME IS NOT ON ISRAEL'S SIDE, APPREHENSION THAT ROLE OF OIL IN INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC CRISIS STRENGTHENS ARAB BARGAINING POSITION, AND WORRY THAT ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL PROGRESS AT HOME IS IMPEDED BY WORLD INFLATION.

3. PALESTINIAN PROBLEM. DEVELOPMENTS AT UN AND STATEMENTS FROM CAIRO HAVE PUSHED THIS PROBLEM TO FOREFRONT OF PUBLIC CONCERN. THE ISRAELIS SEE HARDENING ATTITUDE ON PART OF EGYPT THAT PLO REPRESENT PALESTINIANS AND THAT ISSUE OF PALESTINIANS--NOT SINAI OR GOLAN HEIGHTS--MUST BE RESOLVED BEFORE PROGRESS TOWARDS PEACE CAN BE ACHIEVED. SUPPORT OF PLO AT UN BY GROWING NUMBER OF COUNTRIES IS VIEWED AS DISTURBING DEVELOPMENT AND HEIGHTENS AN ALREADY WELL-DEVELOPED SENSE OF INTERNATIONAL ISOLATION. WHILE ISRAELIS THEMSELVES GENERALLY STILL DO NOT SEE PALESTINIAN PROBLEM AS CENTRAL ISSUE TO PEACE, IT IS INCREASINGLY RECOGNIZED THAT PROGRESS IN RESOLVING PALESTINIAN PROBLEM IS MAJOR FACTOR IN MOVING TOWARD MEANINGFUL TALKS, PARTICULARLY WITH EGYPT. BUT GAP BETWEEN PREVAILING ISRAELI VIEW THAT PALESTINIAN PROBLEM SHOULD BE SETTLED IN CONTEXT OF NEGOTIATIONS WITH JORDAN CONFLICTS WITH WHAT ARE SEEN TO BE HARDENED (IF CONFUSING) SIGNALS FROM EGYPT IN SUPPORT OF PLO. DEVELOPMENT OF EGYPTIAN POSITION ON PALESTINIANS SINCE ILL-FATED ALEXANDRIA COMMUNIQUE HAS CAUSED SERIOUS MISGIVINGS HERE ABOUT EGYPT'S INTENTIONS. HOPES THAT PROGRESS WITH EGYPT MIGHT BE ACHIEVED HAVE BEEN ERODED. THIS IN TURN LEADS TO DOUBT THAT PROGRESS CAN BE MADE ON OTHER FRONTS.

4. RABIN'S POSITION. WHILE GENERAL SUPPORT FOR RABIN REMAINS HIGH, PUBLIC IS CONFUSED ABOUT SPECIFICS OF GOVERNMENT POLICY. RECENT PUBLIC STATEMENTS BY RABIN (RAISING PROSPECT OF INTERIM RATHER THAN FINAL SETTLEMENT ON WEST BANK) AND ALLON (RE

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POSSIBLE ACCEPTANCE OF FEDERATION OF JORDAN PLUS A PALESTINIAN ENTITY) INDICATED A POSTURE OF GROWING FLEXIBILITY, BUT PRESS COMMENTARY SHOWS THAT ISRAELIS CONTINUE TO HAVE DIFFICULTY IN COMING TO GRIPS WITH THE REALITIES OF CONCESSIONS THAT MIGHT BE, OR MUST BE, REQUIRED IN NEGOTIATIONS. FOR EXAMPLE, COMMENTARIES ON NEED TO RETAIN ABU RODEIS OIL FIELDS (OR GUARANTEES OF FUTURE OIL SUPPLIES) IN ANY NEXT-STEP WITHDRAWAL FROM SINAI ILLUSTRATE ISRAELI DIFFICULTY IN CONSIDERING CONCESSIONS IN VIEW OF UNCERTAINTY

ABOUT ACHIEVING REAL PEACE.

5. PROGRESS TO PEACE. ONE YEAR AFTER OCTOBER WAR ISRAELIS SENSE LITTLE OR NO PROGRESS IN SEARCH FOR PEACE WITH THEIR NEIGHBORS, EITHER AS IT RELATES TO TIMING AND PROCEDURES OF NEGOTIATIONS OR TO SUBSTANCE. WHILE THERE IS LITTLE EXPECTATION ON PART OF GENERAL PUBLIC THAT SECRETARY'S VISITS IN AREA WILL PRODUCE SOLUTIONS, IT IS NEVERTHELESS HOPED THAT VISITS WILL LEAD TO CLARIFICATIONS THAT MAY IN NEAR FUTURE SET STAGE FOR RESUMING MOMENTUM IN NEGOTIATING PROCESS. FOR MOST ISRAELIS, THIS MEANS INDICATIONS EGYPT IS PREPARED PAY POLITICAL PRICE FOR FURTHER ISRAELI WITHDRAWALS..

6. ISRAELIS ALSO WOULD LIKE TO BE REASSURED THAT WE CONTINUE TO FAVOR AND SUPPORT A SOLUTION OF THE PALESTINIAN PROBLEM IN THE CONTEXT OF ISRAELI-JORDANIAN NEGOTIATIONS.
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